A CE

NARRATIV

Of the Proceedings

Of the Baptist Church in *Medfield*,

AGAINST

James Morse.

Copied from their Records.

TOGETHER WITH

Mr. *Morse's* REMARKS on the Sentim
maintained by Mr. *Gair* and the Chu
for dissenting from which, Mr. *Morse* wa
communicated.

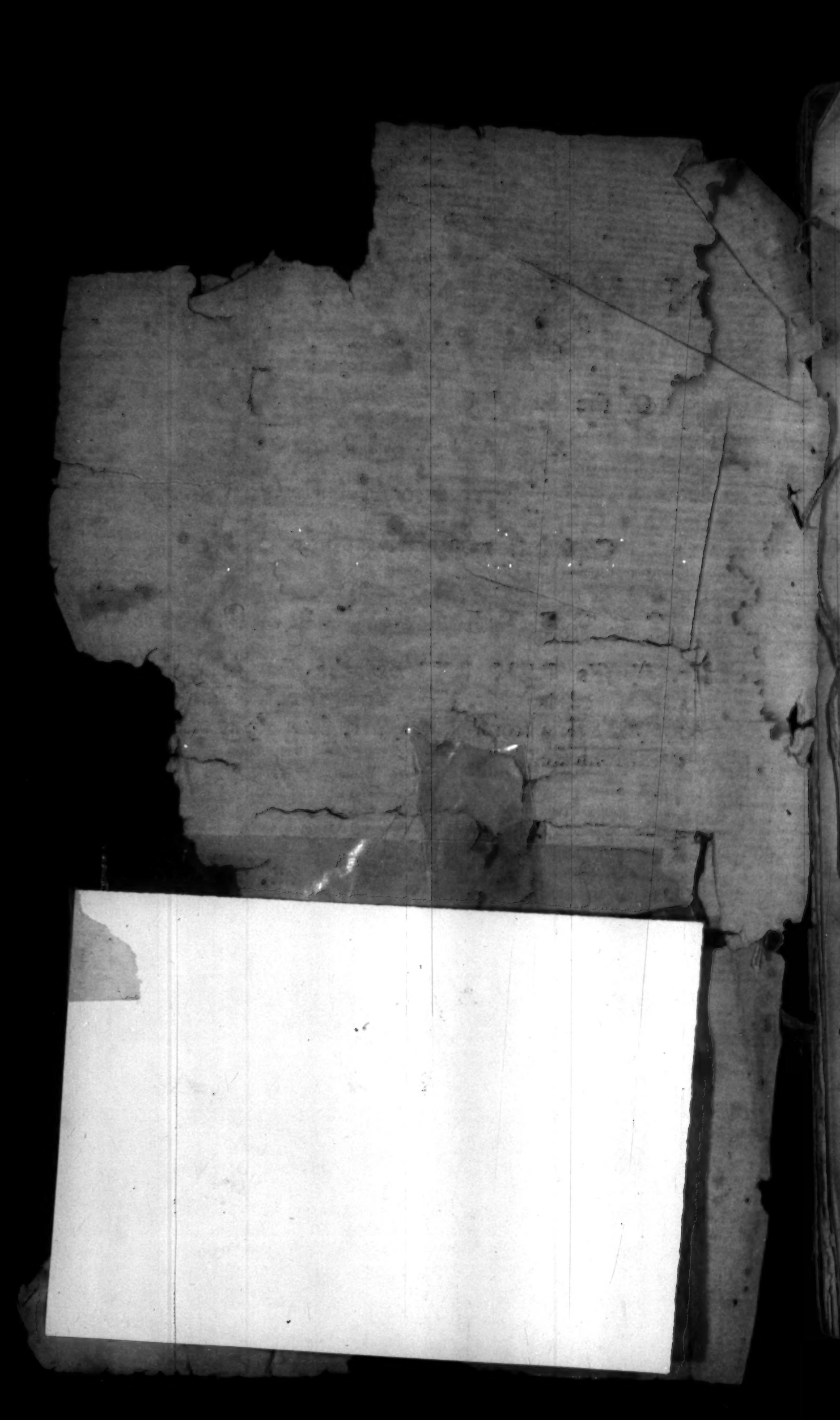
By JAMES MORSE.

Ye have wearied the Lord with your words: yet ye
Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every
that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and
he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?
MALAC

BOSTON:

Printed by BENJAMIN EDES and SON, in Cour

M,DCC,LXXXV.



PREFACE.

THE proceedings of the Baptiſt Church, in this place, againſt me, which are here publiſhed to the world, are, I think, a ſufficient apology in the eye of every perſon of candour and generoſity, for uſing the right, which I have in common, with all other ſubjects of this Commonwealth, of expoſing my ſentiments in print.

HAD I obtained that juſtice from them, which I conceived to be due to the truth of my cauſe, I ſhould have never troubled the publick with my concerns; but as they will ſee by their own votes, that I was denied a hearing on particular articles of their charges againſt me, I thought it no more than a duty which I owed to myſelf, to make a ſolemn appeal to the world.

IF the reader will give himſelf the pains to look into their proceedings, he will find that the principal complaint againſt me was this; That I perverted and miſrepreſented the doctrines and principles of Mr. Gair. Now to clear myſelf of that imputation, I have endeavoured to ſhow in this brief eſſay, from his literal words, that his meaning could be no other than what I had aſſerted. I have not indeed taken up the merits of the controverſy between thoſe Chriſtians who are upon Mr. Edwards's plan, and others; but only ſuch particular parts of it as relate to the diſputes between the Church and myſelf.

I HOPE the reader will excuſe any inaccuracies in the arrangement of the arguments, as the following

lowing is the genuine production of a man of plain unlettered ſenſe, who takes no other guide than reaſon and the holy ſcriptures. I wiſh that this imperfect attempt to vindicate the attributes of the Deity from the aſperſions thrown on them by Mr. *Hopkins* and others, may provoke ſome abler pen to do juſtice to the ſubject; more eſpecially ſince the perfections of God, the cauſe of religion, and the intereſts of virtue and morality depend on the eſtabliſhment of principles directly oppoſite.

I HAVE cautiouſly avoided any attack on their *characters* or *morals*. *It is the thing not the perſon, which I mean to expoſe.* God knows I harbour no malice againſt any of them, and wiſh ſincerely for their conviction and reformation from thoſe errours in doctrine, which are very dangerous to their own ſouls, and pernicious to the peace and happineſs of ſociety.

JAMES MORSE.

Medfield, *June* 21, 1785.

P. S. The reaſons why this publication hath been ſo long delayed are theſe,—In the firſt place, I have made ſeveral attempts to obtain juſtice in a leſs diſagreeable way, than a publick controverſy.—In the ſecond place, I was in hopes, when their reſentments were allayed in ſome degree, they would have been generous enough to have granted me that juſtice, of their own motion, which they denied to my earneſt ſolicitations.

J. M.

VOTES of the Baptist Church in MEDFIELD.

Lords day Novr: 23 1783. The baptist Church of Christ in Medfield was desired to tarry after public worship, when a Complaint was read against Brother James Morse signed by Brot: Abner Bullard, as follows,

"To the baptist Church of Christ in Medfield of which I the subscriber am a member, Dear Bretheren Wheras I am grieved & burdened at the disorderly walk of our Brot: James Morse I desire in this way to lay before You my matter of grievance, seeing I have repeatedly attempted to labour with him upon it, both between us alone, and also with others. My Complaint is that said Brother *misrepresents & perverts* the Ideas & Doctrines professed & preached by the Pastor of this Church, and as held by myself & other members of this Communion, particularly as to *Gods decrees & the attonement*, so as that he declares our Pastor holds and preaches that *God is the author of sin.* But these Ideas we hold are Contrary to ye scripture, & often have declared unto him, we utterly abhorr them. Now Bretheren as ye scripture saith "How can two walk together exceept they are agreed"? If our Pastor does teach that God is ye author of Sin, I desire he may be examined & disciplined; if he does not, I request that this Brother be in subjection to the Church.

The

The Bretheren whom I have desired to assist me in this labour are, Brothers Pelatiah Morse, Asa Mason & Benj[a]: Boiden, who can inform into the affair——

" Walpole Nov[r]: 22. 1783." Abner Bullard."

After some conversation on the subject, as it was not convenient to tarry long, it was moved & urged to appoint a future day to Consider this Complaint, and that our Bretheren who live out of Town be desired to attend. As it was put to Mr: Morse to fix the time, & he utterly refused, it was proposed for the Church to do it, & adjourn, accordingly it was voted to meet the 1st: of December at 9 o'Clock at y[e]; Pastors house.

Monday Dece[r]: 1st: The Chh: met at the Pastors house; opened the meeting by prayer, & proceeded to buisness.—Mr. Morse having allowed that Mr: Bullard had taken the private steps with the Bretheren named, in a regular manner, the Church attempted to go on, but having spent several hours to no purpose, as Mr. Morse would go from one thing to another, & could not be kept to the point, it was moved to nominate some Minister of a Sister Church to advise with us, & act as a Moderator as the Pastor is so far interested in this affair. Mr. Morse freely consented. Mess[rs]: Skillman & Backus were named, & in Case y[e] former fails voted to send for the latter. Voted to adjourn until such time as either of them can attend, and that the Church be notified accordingly.

Dece[r]:

Decer: 23. The Chh: met according to adjournment.

The Complaint was read, and the reasons to Support it

Said reasons are as follows,

" The Reasons I have brought this Compl[illegible]nt to theChurch are, I think I have laboured in a private way with Bro[r]: Morse as far as I could; also as he has broken y[e] agreement into which he entered last summer respecting our difficulties. One part of the agreement then made was, that all which was past should be buried; there were to be no flings, no reflexions, nor were we to mention any thing relating to the affair to any one, or even amongst ourselves; and if M[r]: Morse disliked M[r]: Gair he was to go to him alone about it, and not say any thing only to him first, & alone. And on y[e] following account I consider Brother Morse as having acted contrary to it.

He declared to me in October that *M[r]: Gair & I would lie to hurt his character; I then said, how can you sit down with M[r]: Gair at y[e] Lords Table,? He replied he did not see how he could Consistently. At the same time & place he said he had opposed the whole Church while I was gone into the countery, and that M[r]: Gair could not be easy, but must bring it into the pulpit the next lord's day where nobody could oppose him. At different

* I would not have the publick think hardly of Mr. Gair; for he has, since the censure, made me publick satisfaction for his unfriendly attempts in saying I was guilty of false-speaking. J. M.

different times afterwards I attempted to labour with him, & took two Bretheren.

Amongst other things I now alledge againſt him I laboured on what he ſaid above ; he ſaid, I don't want to ſay any thing about Mr: Gair's lying, I want to have the matter ſettled with you. The Inſtance Mr: Morſe named of our lying was, in ſaying before Meſsr: Skillman & Stillman, the Church was uneaſy with him, when they were not. Having done what I viewed my duty in a private Courſe of labour, I had no other way than to lay the affair all of it before the Church. Bror: Morſe allowed at our laſt Church meeting, that I brought this regularly to the Church. And beſides the above reaſons to ſhew he has broken the agreement, I will add what at the ſame time ſupports my Complaint as to misrepreſenting the Paſtor. Bror: Morse ſaid to Bror: Henery Plimpton "Mr: Gair has dropped the *Hopkintonian* principles ſince Mr: Skillman was here, but now he has got into the * *Arminian* doctrine". When Bror: Plimpton was called to ſpeak to this at the laſt Church meeting, not only Mr: Morse did not deny it, but repeated it before yr: Bretheren, "He is an Arminian &cc. and appealed to a late ſermon. The Reaſons I bring to ſupport my Complaint beſides what Mr: Morſe ſaid to Mr: Plimpton & before the Church as to yr: Charge of Arminiaſms are, his repreſenting that Mr: Gair laid it down, that man has *no inability* to belive, & that there is no need of

* This converſation paſſed after the charge was brought, and therefore could not be the reaſon of it. J. M.

of divine energy in faith, when preaching from y^e: text, "this is y^e: work of God that ye beli[illegible]": * M^r: Cutler, & M^r: Mason attempted at y^e: same time to shew him his error in such a representation of the sermon, this was directly after divine service at M^r: Gair's house.

Another Instance was directly after the Communion in Nov^r: When M^r: Gair had preached respecting y^e: soverignty of God in Providence & Redemption. "I will work, & who shall let it, Isaih 43 & 13," was y^e: text. Bro^r: Mason heared him say "M^r: Gair does hold God is y^e: author of sin."——

Another time in y^e: hearing of Bro^r: Pelatiah Morse Asa Mason, & M^rs: Mason, he said M^r: Gair, when preaching from y^e: text, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," laid down that we are to be so resigned to y^e: will of God, as to have *no sort of mourning* in any condition, for all which befalleth us is Gods will; therfore M^r: Morse says, "as God has a secret & revealed will, & his will is always done, so M^r: Gair holds, & myself, & all the Hopkintonians, let us do what we will we glorify God, if we keep his law, or brake it we glorify him" "This is proving y^e: will & decree of God by the works of y^e: Devil, I dont like such reasonings." Bro^r: Morse repeated the same also at the last Church meeting.

* I only showed Mr. Cutler the text, and asked his opinion of it, without saying any more upon it that evening: I therefore deny the substance and spirit of this evidence. Mr Cutler never to my knowledge asserted it. J. [illegible]

At another time he perverted & misrepresented Mr: Gair in a sermon on the attonement. The text was "Glory to God in the highest &c." He said that Mr. Gair preached that "Christ did not die to save sinners, and that a late pamphlet written by Mr: Emmons holds out the same, & Mr: Gair likes that book. The revd: Mr: Semands & Mr: Mason were present, as he represented the matter, M: Semands said, " Mr: Gair has not that to dispute with me but the Apostle." but when Mr: Mason & I told how it was, he replied that he fully agreed with Mr: Gair, & us. As Mr: Morse see that we took him up for making M: Gair an offender for words, he said " I am not for his particular words, it is his Ideas." Also before rev Mr: Stillman & Mr: Boiden, Mr: Morse represented the Church & Mr: Gair, as " denying the attonement and holding we are justified by supreme love." They both attempted to shew his error to him, & how hurtful such Conduct would prove to the Church. Mr: Boiden also added, " You are abusive to say so, & yet say nothing of it when members are received as all have liberty to speak & ask Questions"

The above reasons were voted valid, & as fully supporting the Complaint, after several hours debate. [The several Votes passed this 23 of December were by order of ye: Church sent Mr: Morse]

Medfield March 6 1784. The baptist Church met according to adjournment, & after looking to heaven for direction proceeded to buisness.

The votes & transactions of the last meeting were read, & also the complaint against Mr: Morse.

Mr:

Mr: Morse Requeſted a copy of all the papers which relate to this affair, the Church reſolved that he has a right to a copy of the complaint—all y^e: Votes—and the ſeveral reaſons which ſupport y^e: complaint, voted accordingly that he be ſerved with them.—

As at this adjournment, the buiſneſs of which was to hear his confeſſion, or reject him, Mr: Morse appeared unhumbled, & made many attempts to vindicate himſelf, & go over what was cloſed at the laſt meeting; as he railed againſt us & repeated various falſe accuſations againſt the Church: the bretheren retired a few minutes, & took into Conſideration amongſt other things wether it is adviſable to grant him Liberty to read a Certain paper, which he deſired to do, & concluded to give him an opportunity. Afterwards it was moved & ſeconded that two of the Bretheren in conjunction with the Paſtor be choſen to prepare a ſuitable vote in reſpect to the buiſneſs of this meeting, & that it be examined & paſſed to morrow, as y^e: meeting will be adjourned.

Voted and Choſe Brother Pelatiah Morse, & Bro: Benj^a: Boiden. Voted to adjourn until to-morrow after communion.——

Concluded with prayer——

March 7th: After communion it was mentioned that the Vote which had been prepared & examined now remained to be past. (Mr: Morse was not preſent.) After the ſolemn nature, & affecting conſiderations of this transaction now to be performed, in the view of holy Angells & the great Jehovah were opened, the following Vote was

 read,

read, Wheras a complaint has been brought to this Church againſt Brother James Morse by Brother Abner Bullard for " miſrepreſenting & perverting the Paſtor & the Church in our Ideas & principles as to Gods decrees & the attonement," which complaint ſaid Bro^{r}: Morse has allowed before the Church in the meeting of y^{e}: 1st: of December was brought after Bro^{r}: Bullard had taken the regular ſteps in a private manner, the Church ſuppoſing the ſame, and as we have had ſeveral meetings to attempt a goſpel ſettlement of this grievance, and at the laſt meeting we reſolved, & voted that "this Complaint is fully proved," but nevertheleſs concluded to wait *a ſpace* longer to ſee wether the offending Brother would not *repent*, Revelations 2 & 21, in the mean time the Paſtor hath viſited him, & ſeveral Bretheren have repeatedly laboured and taken pains with him to no purpoſe; during which he hath neglected public worship in any ſociety, hath continued to rail against the Church, and against the respectable Miniſter who was ſo kind as to attend with us, at our request and M^{r}: Morses " free Conſent," and yet he remaineth Obſtinate & incorrigable to our great greif and lamentation, resolved, that we conceive his temper & Conduct thro all the proceſs of this labour with him is contrary to the ſpirit of Chriſt; and that his behaviour in miſrepreſenting & perverting our Ideas and thoſe of the Paſtors, is *a Practice* which tends to vain disputations, wrangling, Contentions, & various diviſions dangerous to the good of any Community, is *a Practice* contrary to an expreſs article of our Covenant which referrs

to

to a good Conversation, and is *a Practice* reproachful to the Christian profession.

And being directed Rom 16 & 17, 18 verses, to "mark & avoid those who Cause divisions & offences," though "by their fair speeches, & good words they may deceive the hearts of the simple:" Also we are told 1st Corin 10 & 16 "If any man seemeth to be Contentious the Churches of God have no such Custom;" and in James 1 & 26 "If any man seem to be religious—and bridleth not his tongue—this man's religion is vain:"

For the glory of God; for y: Conviction & good of this professor; that the scriptural discipline of the Church may be maintained; and that "he who sinneth, may be rebuked before all, that others also may fear," 1st Timothy 5 & 20: We therfore, as in the fear of God do by the authority of Christ Matthew 18 & 17 vote and declare that the aforesaid Brother James Morse is no more a member of this Church, but as a disorderly Walker we in this public & formal manner withdraw all fellowship from him, to us he is a stranger, & has no right to the special priviliges of this Church

This vote passed in the Affirmative by the sign of rising up, which is the usual sign when members are received ——

Voted that the Pastor serve M: Morse with this proceeding ——

Voted to dissolve this meeting.

A true Copy Thomas Gair —

Medfield March 15. 1784

M: James Morse ——————————

REMARKS,

REMARKS, &c.

SECTION I.

That God is not the Author of Sin, and that the Idea of a ſecret and revealed Will is abſurd.

IT is commonly obſerved by the diſciples of Mr. H. "That God hath decreed all the moral evil which ever exiſted in the world; that he hath a ſecret and revealed will; that Adam and his poſterity who have broken God's law *acted freely*, and are liable to puniſhment; and yet glorify God, perform his benevolent deſigns, and bring about the greateſt good to the whole." They further add, "That the foreknowledge of God neceſſarily involves us in this concluſion, and that to deny it would ſtrip him of his perfections."

In anſwer to theſe ſentiments, I would aſk, By what means they have obtained this important intelligence? Have they aſcended up on high, and penetrated the height of Heaven? Are their minds ſo ſublime, as to fathom the abyſs of infinite wiſdom? If the "will be ſecret, how do they then know it? Or how can it be *ſecret*, when we hear it declared to us ſo often from the deſk? Surely they are ill fitted for counſellors of the cabinet, ſince

ſince it is evident they have ſhamefully abuſed the confidence repoſed in them. But perhaps they will ſay, "That they prove this ſecret purpoſe by the effect." This, I anſwer, is proving the will of God by the works of the devil; ſince if we may truſt the ſcriptures, all ſin and wickedneſs are aſcribed to his influence over the hearts and lives of men?

I HOPE thoſe gentlemen will not deny, that the ſcriptures are an evident and unqueſtionable declaration of the *divine will*, and are a rule and law by which mankind are to be governed. If they admit this ſentiment as true, it muſt follow, that the divine law is a tranſcript of the Deity, and as far as it relates to finite creatures, a rule for their actions, founded on his pleaſure. To obey the precepts of the ſcriptures, is to obey God. To act agreeably to them, is to fill up the relation we ſtand in to him, in a becoming manner. Now, how is it poſſible we can glorify God by acting contrary to the law he hath given us? If ſin be for his glory, it follows, that to anſwer the purpoſes of our exiſtence, we muſt diſobey the *known* and *revealed* law of heaven; and that God has determined to govern his creatures by the impulſe of motives and actions, contrary to the expreſs rule of faith and practice which he hath given us to govern our lives by. For how can we glorify God, without acting agreeably to his mind and will? And is not the ſcripture and its rules directly contradictory to a ſinful life? If both equally tend to increaſe the general good, how can we form any juſt eſtimate of harmony, fitneſs, and wiſdom, in the divine nature?

WHE

WHEN the devil tempted our first parents, he said, *Ye shall be as Gods, knowing good and evil.* Mr. Hopkins and his followers have much the same argument, viz. The world is in much better circumstances than if Adam had not sinned: for, add they, "If God had not foreseen that sin was for the best, he would have prevented it." Their reasoning therefore is contained in the words of the serpent. The devil proposed that man should receive a good from what his Maker had declared to be an evil, and a crime to be punished with death. And *they* declare, that when we break the natural and moral law of God, we add to his glory, and accomplish his general plan by which the universe is governed.

IN answer to their objection founded upon the foreknowledge of God, I would answer, That the Deity made man free both in a natural and moral sense, and in that freedom his happiness consists. If God had made him holy by necessity, there had been neither *praise* nor *blame* in his actions. The very existence of virtue, in a rational way, depends upon the possibility of being vitious. Nor can we, agreeably to our notions of truth, conceive of any other law by which intelligent creatures can be governed.

BUT as our ideas of this subject are extremely limited and confined, there are but two sources whence we can draw any probable conclusions on this head: The first, is from the light of nature; the second, is from the sacred scriptures.

BY the first, we are assured, that God is perfectly holy, wise, and good; that all sin is opposite to his nature;

nature; that, as a moral Governour, he muſt be obliged to puniſh it, for the ſake of maintaining the dignity of his character. From the dictates of reaſon we are taught the unfitneſs of ſin. We cannot commit it without doing violence to our feelings; nor can we be guilty of it, without remorſe and anguiſh, and in many inſtances ſuffering puniſhment for it in this world. If this ſenſe of evil be implanted in us by our Creator, I would beg leave to aſk, Whether the ſinner do not break the law of his nature; and whether, if he break the law of his nature, and pervert the deſign and end of his being, he can be ſaid to glorify God, equally as if he were wiſe and good? Now this muſt be granted, if we admit ſin to be a part of the divine plan: for the ſinner acts agreeably to his nature, and faithfully occupies the poſt allotted him in the ſcale of beings.

As to the ſecond ſource whence we have our ideas of God, that is the ſcriptures, I think it is ſo plain beyond all doubt, that they repreſent ſin as oppoſite to the divine nature and law, that I ſhall not trouble my readers or myſelf with particular proofs.

The conſequence of each of theſe arguments is this, That if ſin be a part of the divine plan, and be for the divine glory, "that God has given us a law, contrary to his own deſigns; and deludes us with a rule which he means we ſhould break; and governs us virtually by motives and impulſes to that very line of conduct which is contrary to his nature, to our happineſs, and his revealed will." I defy the moſt ſubtile among them to evade the force of this concluſion.

AND were this idea eſtabliſhed beyond all doubt, I can ſee no blame in vice. Let a man commit murder, theft, or any other heinous crime, he acts but according to the decrees of God, and the eſtabliſhed plan by which he governs the world. If they ſay, God has forbidden theſe and other crimes, it may be anſwered, That he makes one law contradict another; and that is by no means agreeable to a Being who governs with wiſdom and fitneſs.

I AM ſenſible that an objection may be brought which deſerves ſome attention, i. e. "The univerſe, being produced by a Being infinitely wiſe and good, muſt of courſe be the reſult of the higheſt degree of wiſdom, truth, and goodneſs; and therefore, whatever imperfection there may be in the parts of it, according to our view of them, yet conſidered as *parts*, they muſt be *beautiful* and *good*, or elſe the credit of the builder is diminiſhed. Hence natural and moral evil being parts of the divine plan, are right and fit in themſelves, and are conducive to the beauty of the creation, and the glory of its author."

THIS ſentiment deſerves the more weight, becauſe it appears to carry with it a plauſible regard for the divine honour, &c. But yet, though we grant the principle, we deny the concluſion. Theſe gentlemen appear to me to have miſtaken the caſe in their view of the matter, and to have attempted ſubjects beyond the precinct and graſp of the human mind. I would therefore recommend to them this ſentiment from the Book of Wiſdom, Chap. 9. 13, 14, 15, & 16th verſes: *For what man is he*

that

that can know the counſel of God? Or who can think what the will of the Lord is? For the thoughts of mortal men are miſerable, and their devices are but uncertain. For the corruptible body preſſeth down the ſoul, and the earthly tabernacle weigheth down the mind that muſeth upon many things. And hardly do we gueſs aright at things that are upon the earth, and with labour do we find out the things that are before us: but the things that are in heaven who hath ſearched out?

WHEN we talk of the *univerſe*, and conſider it as referring to the whole moral and intelligent creation, we go beyond our knowledge and ſtrength. For how many myriads of reaſonable creatures there are beſides man we know not; nor what connexion they have with us, as parts of the ſame *whole*, we are utterly ignorant. To attempt to ſpeak with poſitiveneſs upon the *caſe*, would be inſolent and abſurd. All the concluſions we can draw are from that part of nature which is unfolded to our mind and ſenſes. For when one aſſerts, "That ſin is for the general good; becauſe it is for the advantage of ſome unknown beings;" another with equal probability may conjecture, "That it injures them as much as it doth man." The whole argument is of courſe involved in a labyrinth: *clouds and darkneſs* cover it on all ſides.

BUT when we uſe the term *univerſe*, we ſhould confine it to man. The queſtion then is, "Whether natural and moral evil be beſt for man upon the whole? or whether man fulfil the purpoſes of heaven in commiting it?" In anſwer to which, I would obſerve, 1ſt. That God hath implanted

within the mind a ſenſe of ſhame and remorſe, which naturally follows the practice of vice; and that ſelf-approbation and delight are the effects of virtue and piety. This is at leaſt a relative law by which mankind are governed. If therefore ſin be right in itſelf, there could be no ſhame or miſery in the commiſſion of it. But the contrary is evident. And if ſin be abſolutely agreeable to the will of God, it follows, that he hath trained up all his offspring to believe a lie. For his abſolute purpoſes contradict the relative ſenſe of good and evil which he hath implanted in their minds. If we appeal to experience and common ſenſe for a deciſion of this point, we cannot be long at a loſs. Do not all mankind feel the force of the principle we have deſcribed? Is it poſſible, even by the force of a contrary education, to root out the idea of perfect freedom in human actions? We know it is not. Muſt we not therefore be forced to this conſequence, That this relative law is founded upon the principles of everlaſting truth and wiſdom?

But, Secondly, Can we ſuppoſe the Deity to be the *common Father* of the human race, and deſirous of their happineſs, and yet that by arbitrary impulſes on their minds, and by an irrevocable decree, he forces them to ſuch a line of conduct here, as will make them vile and wretched in this world, and miſerable beyond all conception in the next? What a contradiction to the common ſenſe of mankind! How gloomy and horrid a deſcription of the divine nature! For my own part, before I would ſubſcribe to it, I would take ſanctuary in atheiſm itſelf; For it would be better to ſay, *as the*

fool

fool doth in his heart, There is no God, than to ſuppoſe that the world is governed by an almighty capricious Tyrant, who hath neceſſarily impoſed upon millions of his offspring a wretched being in this world, and an endleſs duration of it in the next.

WHAT idea can be more oppoſite to reaſon, than "That ſin is for the general good of man?" Let us conſider what are its known and common effects. By it death and a long train of natural and moral evils are introduced into the world; by which means all paſt ages have been groaning under bondage. By it we ſee ſickneſs, pain and poverty annoy the human ſpecies, which finally level the image of God with the duſt. By it we ſee a thouſand vices reigning in the heart and expreſſed in the life of man. By it we ſee miſery in innumerable forms throughout this world, and the greater part of rational nature ſuffering ſharp and terrible evils, which would have been otherwiſe unknown. And if we may believe the ſacred oracles, we muſt ſuppoſe theſe are but the ſmaller part of the evils which ſin hath generated. For we are there taught that there is a puniſhment dreadful beyond thought allotted to every impenitent ſinner: And conſidering the ſtate of religion and morals which now and in all paſt ages hath prevailed among men, we muſt ſuppoſe that a great part of them will ſuffer the wrath of God through boundleſs ages. Can we affix the idea of general good to ſuch great and general evil? We might with as much propriety put a man upon the rack, in order to convince him of the advantage of eaſe and health, that he might enjoy them the better in future.

I AM ſenſible there might be many other arguments uſed on this head; but the facts as they have been ſtated, muſt appear ſo agreeable to the common ſenſe of mankind, that it would be treſpaſſing on the time and patience of the publick to enlarge.

I SHALL go on to the other objections which Mr. G. and the Church brought againſt me; and for which they have cut me off from their charity and chriſtian communion. At the ſame time, I ſhall take a curſory view of ſuch points wherein I differ from them, as may be neceſſary to give my reader a more clear idea of the merits of the cauſe.

SECTION II.

That the idea of Selfiſhneſs being ſinful, as maintained by Mr. G. and the diſciples of Mr. Hopkins, is falſe and abſurd.

THE deſire of happineſs is a principle natural to all mankind. It therefore is a law of nature ingrafted by the hand of God. It is commonly called the firſt law of nature, or *ſelf-preſervation*; and is eſſential to the purpoſes of preſent exiſtence. The variety of actions which diſtinguiſh mankind, all terminate in a regard to their own intereſt. The good man ſeeks for happineſs in the ways of virtue; the wicked man, in the pleaſures

pleaſures of ſin. The former acts agreeably to nature and its law: his actions are commendable. The latter goes into the exceſſes of the ſenſes: and is criminal. But wherein conſiſts the crime? Not in being *ſelfiſh*; for they are both equally ſo; but in ſeeking happineſs in the wrong road, which will deſtroy it, inſtead of obtaining it. The good man follows the pure, uncorrupted dictates of reaſon and religion, and thereby promotes his own happineſs in the higheſt poſſible degree.

As to diſintereſted love, there is no ſuch thing in nature. The moſt early manifeſtation of the Deity to man was, that he ſhould promote his happineſs by obedience, and his miſery by rebellion. Theſe motives were guarded with ſuch penalties, that man, not only from inclination, but neceſſity, might be ſtimulated to ſuch conduct as would make him happy. But can this be reconciled with ſupreme love to God? I anſwer it can, becauſe we may love God as a Creator, Governour, and Father; as a Being from whom all our happineſs hath ariſen, and from whom we expect it will be continued. Our love to God and our regard to our own happineſs are principles ſo connected, that the mind cannot ſeparate them; nor can it be done, without involving us in errours and impiety. The belief, that the glory of God is promoted by the virtue, piety, and happineſs of his creatures, is one of the fundamental principles of natural religion, and is confirmed every where in the ſacred ſcriptures.

BEFORE we diſmiſs this head, we ſhall anſwer one or two of the moſt material objections. The

firſt

first is, "That the insignificant state of man, the "infinite distance between his Maker and himself, "is of such a kind, that it implies an obligation "upon him to think meanly of himself and ho-"nourably of others: That this temper is an im-"portant branch of true religion. This they il-"lustrate by this familiar observation: *As a drop "of water to a generous stream, so ought man to "consider himself before the whole family of his "fellow-creatures."

But let us very briefly examine this argument. The greatness or the smallness of an object can only be considered by comparison. Man, considered as a part of the universe, even upon *their own plan*, is perfect. It is only in a comparative view then that he appears mean or insignificant. As a part of the works of God, he ought to *reverence himself*. As a being desirous of happiness, he cannot but love himself. Therefore to pursue and consult his own happiness, by adhering to the laws of his nature, is not wrong; nor can we affix the idea of sin to it, unless we mean to censure the law of God, written in the human heart, as unfit and sinful. The Deity having connected self-love so intimately with our frame, we may conclude, that there is no criminality in it; because, by consulting our real happiness, we obey his call.

But here let us make a distinction between self-love which is part of the essence of man, and a gross servile temper which sacrifices all considerations to its temporal interest. The patriot dies for his country;

* See Mrs. Hannah Adams's Compendium.

country; the martyr, for his religion; the generous man expends his fortune in private charity; the pious man rejects the pleasures of sense: yet still all these are guided by self-love, though we grant that it is purified and refined by virtue. For were there no fame and glory for the patriot, no heaven for the martyr, no applause or satisfaction for the generous man, no self-approbation for the man of piety, there could be no sufficient motives for their several virtues. As therefore God has so closely connected virtue with interest, *let no man put them asunder.*

And is not the distinction obvious to common sense, at the first sight, between such actions as we have described, and those which are commonly called selfish; such for example, as a man's sacrificing his trust for a paltry sum of money, betraying his friend, with-holding his substance from the poor, &c? Is it right to class two principles under one head, when the one leads human nature to the highest possible glory and dignity, and the other degrades man below the brutal creation?

There appears no sentiment more shocking, to the feelings of humanity, and the common sense of mankind, than this, "That it is necessary, in order for conversion, that a good man should be willing to be damned for the glory of God!" The oracles of truth inform us, that *no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but loveth and cherisheth it.* Can a man be contented to suffer the terrible punishments of hell, because it is the pleasure of his Creator? Is it possible for him to renounce the feelings of nature, and renounce its first principles? The

very assertion would deserve no other confutation than a smile of contempt, if it did not fill the mind with horrour at the gross impiety and wickedness of it. Besides, the mild and merciful dispensation of the gospel, represents the Deity in a very different point of view; *as gracious and long-suffering; slow to anger, and of abundant kindness; not willing that any should perish, but chusing rather that they should return, repent, and live.* Whereas the idea of his being glorified by sin, and by the punishment of sinners, and his requiring the good man to be willing to suffer for his glory, without any voluntary fault, pictures him as an almighty Tyrant, more cruel and sanguinary than Moloch, and more malicious in his designs than even Satan himself: For, according to Mr. H. the first is the efficient cause, the last only the necessary effect.

SECTION III.

Some few Remarks on the distinction used by Mr. G. concerning God's decreeing Sin, and still not being the Author of Sin.

IN order to convey a clear idea of the subject, it will be proper to define each of the words.

AN Author, according to the common acceptation of the word, means a founder, a contriver, or inventor of any design which by and of himself,

or through the influence of others, he is able t bring to paſs. The inventor of a book is called a author; becauſe ſuch and ſuch ideas are put together by his contrivance and deſign. The man who plans a city, or a houſe, is called the author of it; becauſe he gave directions in what manner it ſhould be erected. The man who plans a form of government may be called the author of it; becauſe the forms of it and the laws are owing to a ſyſtem which he framed and adopted. In a word, any one who deſigns or cauſes a *thing*, may be called the author of it; becauſe its origin, riſe and progreſs are owing to the ſame cauſe.

A DECREE is a law, or order, which the being who commands deſigns ſhould be put into execution. It is the effect of a will in the Governour, that the governed ſhould obey. It would be abſurd to the laſt degree, to ſuppoſe a ſupreme authority ſhould enact a ſtatute, and not intend that ſtatute ſhould be obeyed. Whatever a ruler decrees, he not only therefore *authorizes*, or licences, but he commands under the penalties of diſobedience. Now let the reader apply theſe definitions to the caſe in hand.

IF God decreed ſin, as Mr. G. and thoſe of his ſect will allow, I would beg leave to aſk, Why he may not be called the author of it? To ſay there is a decree without an author, is as abſurd as to ſay, there is an effect without a cauſe. Is not the word, according to the rules of truth and of common ſenſe, applicable to the reſult of the wiſdom and

goodneſs of the Deity in governing the natural and moral world? If then God thought that ſin was neceſſary for the common good of the intelligent univerſe, and of courſe decreed it; it was as much to all *intents and purpoſes*, his own *work* and *deſign*, as it is that of the ſinner who executes it, or of the evil ſpirit who excites to it.

NEITHER can I ſee any other way of evading this conſequence, unleſs they will allow, that God is not charged with forming the univerſe, but only with the executive government of it; or, on the other hand, with only forming or planning whilſt the execution of it was left wholly to inferiour beings. For either God is the author of ſin, if he decrees it; or elſe he is not the author of his own decrees. And if he be not the author of them, I would beg to know who is? Theſe diſtinctions are too nice and ſubtile for me, who am a *plain unlettered* man, and therefore I would wiſh that thoſe who deal in them would inſtruct me. To me I confeſs they appear like the notion of Mr. Murray reſpecting the puniſhment of ſin, ſeparate from the agent who commits it. Common ſenſe rejects both notions as abſurd and falſe. But I ſhall not attempt to enlarge upon this argument. To prove the ſun ſhines, or that the graſs is green, would be difficult, if attempted by metaphyſical arguments: *though in order for conviction, all that a man hath to do is to open his eyes.*

SECTION

SECTION IV.

Some observations on the doctrine of the Atonement, occasioned by an assertion of Mr. G. "That Christ did not come into the world to save Sinners; but rather primarily to magnify the Law and to make it honourable."

IT must ever appear to a person who hath ever but a slight and transient knowledge of the holy scriptures, that the main end and design of the coming of Christ into the world was to satisfy divine justice, and prepare a consistent way for the pardon and salvation of mankind. Look into the Old Testament, and you will find numerous types and figures by which this great sacrifice was represented. Examine the Prophecies, and they point him out as a Deliverer and Saviour. Search into his own account of himself, and you will hear him declare, *that he came to seek and to save that which was lost.* The character and dignity he sustained, rendered it necessary that his errand should be important. *For he was the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person; in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily.* Now can any one suppose, that the only design of Christ was to *magnify the law*; when any mere man, such as a prophet or holy man, might have done the same? Doth not the idea of considering him as no more than a law-giver (or one to obey the law) degrade

the

the idea of him from what we have in the New-Teſtament? And though we do not deny, that one part of Chriſt's miſſion was to obſerve the law of God, and afford an example to mankind of perfect holineſs and innocence; yet the main end of his coming on earth was to prepare the way for our reconciliation with God.

BUT in order to give my reader a plainer view of the ſubject, I would beg him to attend to ſeveral arguments which I ſhall offer on this head.

1. THE ſtate of human nature required a Saviour.

2. THE plan of eternal life is agreeable to the ideas of the atonement.

3. THE plain and evident declarations of the New Teſtament put it beyond the poſſibility of a queſtion.

1. THE ſtate of human nature required a Saviour. The Deity, who is perfectly wiſe and juſt, muſt ever govern his intelligent creatures by laws ſuited to their nature. The ideas of good and evil which he hath implanted in our minds, lead us to ſuppoſe that he will reward the one, and puniſh the other. The preſent ſtate of human nature is weak and degenerate, continually expoſed to ſin, and conſequently to miſery. The goodneſs of God muſt lead him to pity his offspring, thus liable to pain and ſorrow here, and to unſpeakable miſery hereafter. Still his juſtice would remonſtrate againſt ſuffering the ſinner to eſcape; and much more, againſt admitting him to pardon and favour. The attributes of God muſt be agreeable to each other. Now had there been no way for the final

ſalvation

ſalvation of man, a great part of the *offspring* of God muſt have periſhed: and this would have caſt a cloud and ſhade on the creation of God; ſince his *glory* and *honour* are magnified by the progreſs of virtue and happineſs in the world. Therefore, to ſolve all theſe difficulties, Chriſt came into the world, ſuffered and died, that we might live through him: by which means we ſee juſtice and mercy reconciled; *glory to God in the higheſt, peace on earth, and good will to men.*

It would be preſumptuous in us to ſay, that the ſupreme Being could not have deviſed another way for the ſalvation of man than Jeſus Chriſt: Undoubtedly he might. But it is not for us to penetrate the *abyſs of infinite wiſdom*, or unfold the counſels *of the Moſt High: For ſecret things belong to God: But to us and our children it is revealed*, "*That there is no other name given under heaven among men, whereby they may be ſaved, but by Jeſus Chriſt.*"

If we were ſaved by the mere will and pleaſure of the Deity, without the interpoſition of the Saviour, what end or purpoſe could his coming into the world anſwer? It might have been equally conſiſtent with goodneſs to have ſaved wicked men without the ſacrifice of an innocent life, as with it. For, according to their ideas, moral action has no concern in the caſe; there being no other cauſe for the ſalvation of ſome, and the deſtruction of the *greater part* than a decree of the Author of nature; which, if he be all-powerful, could have taken place without the death of Chriſt: ſince it ſeems worſe and more cruel to deſtroy men with the

the forms of law and juſtice than without them.

2. But I haſten to the ſecond argument which I ſhall uſe on this point, i. e. The plan of eternal life held up in the Goſpel is agreeable to our idea of the atonement.

The main requirements held up in the Goſpel are theſe: An aſſent to the great truths of natural religion: A belief on the perſon and character of Chriſt, as repreſented in the New Teſtament: A proper and rational dependence on his merits: A ſincere endeavour to conform to his laws.

As to the firſt of theſe heads, I conceive it to be plain beyond the power of contradiction; ſince the Goſpel goes upon the very ſuppoſition of the being of a God, and of a ſtate of rewards and puniſhments: *He that cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of thoſe that diligently ſeek him.*

In order to convince my readers of the truth and juſtice of the ſecond of theſe obſervations, I would refer them to thoſe few but expreſſive paſſages of the New Teſtament, 1ſt John v. 1. *Whoſoever believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt*, is born *of God.* Again, iii chapter, 22d verſe, *This is his commandment, that we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.*

In a word, look over the whole Goſpel, and you will find the ſpirit and meaning of theſe aſſertions demonſtrated in the cleareſt and the moſt ſignificant language, beyond the poſſibility of a queſtion. So that to found our expectations of happineſs on any other grounds than the merits and death of Chriſt, is building, as the Apoſtle terms it, upon wood, hay, ſtubble, &c.

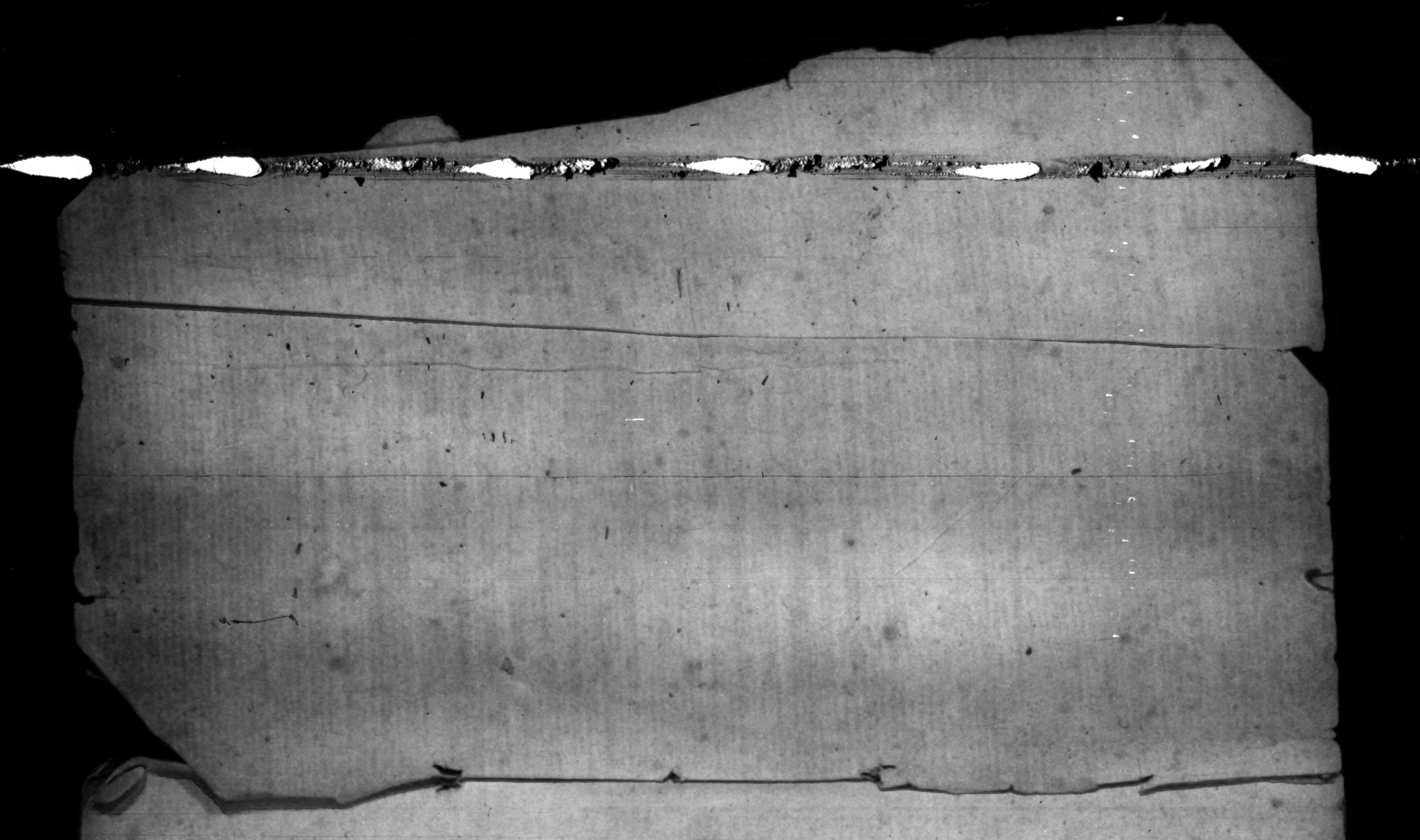
3. I COME now to the laſt thing on which I ſhall ſpeak, i. e. The plain and evident declarations of the New Teſtament reſpecting the atonement, to prove, that the main and ultimate end of Chriſt's errand into the world was to ſave ſinners.

HERE I ſhall only tranſcribe a few paſſages of the ſcriptures, and leave my reader to make his own comments upon them. As 1ſt Timothy i. 15. *This is a faithful ſaying and worthy of all acceptation, that Jeſus Chriſt came into the world to ſave ſinners.* 1 Pet. iii. 8. *For Chriſt alſo hath once ſuffered for ſins, the juſt for the unjuſt, that he might bring us to God.* Epheſians ii. 13. *But now in Jeſus Chriſt, ye who ſometime were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of Chriſt: for he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having aboliſhed in his fleſh the law of commandments contained in ordinances, for to make in himſelf of twain, one new man, ſo making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the croſs, having ſlain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were nigh. Now therefore ye are no more ſtrangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the ſaints, and houſehold of God.*

I AM ſenſible that many more paſſages might be brought in favour of the propoſition laid down: but theſe muſt be ſufficient to convince any, except thoſe who are wilfully prejudiced, and who will *not believe* what our Saviour ſaith of himſelf, *That he came to ſeek and to ſave that which was loſt.*

THUS I have ventured humbly to lay my sentiments before the publick upon those points, for which I was suspended from the Baptist Church. I have not gone over with all that I suppose might be urged on this subject. I am sensible of the disadvantages of my education, and therefore beg the candour of the publick.

To truth, to common sense, and to the sacred scriptures, I make my appeal. I shall not protract this dispute, being conscious that things of this nature too often trespass on the reader's patience.

I COULD not but think myself injured by the proceedings of the Church; and therefore, as I was denied a fair hearing, meant to defend the opinions for which I was condemned before the publick at large.

I HAVE all along endeavoured to treat my opponents with decency and charity; and if I have trespassed on either, I beg the reader would impute it to ignorance and not design. For I am sensible that it becomes Christians, above all other men, to observe moderation and candour, and to treat each other with mildness, whilst contending for what they suppose to be truth.